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THE RESTORATION OF DISABLED SOLDIERS TO INDUSTRIAL SERVICE

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IN past years and in connection with past wars, the disabled soldier has been managed in different ways, but for the most part not wisely and not well. He has suffered from indiscriminate and ill-considered efforts to help him in his unfortunate condition just as indigent persons have, in civil life.

I remember very well being in a foreign capital a good many years ago and seeing a man with a tattered uniform, an old soldier, grinding a hurdygurdy. Upon making some remark about it I was informed that this man had been given his hurdygurdy by the government as a means of helping him. This represents, perhaps, an extremely bad way of helping that soldier but there have been other bad ways of helping disabled soldiers. I am happy to be able to say that all of the progressive governments engaged in this war have taken better steps to assist the men who have been permanently damaged in their service.

It is apparent that what the soldier requires is something which will make him self-supporting and self-respecting; something which will enable him, not simply to exist, but to make a living in such a way as to permit him to compete with other men who are not disabled, or at least not mutilated as he is. In other words, if we cannot dispose completely of the mutilation can we perhaps dispose of the man's disablement? It is because this has been found to be practicable that it is worth while discussing this matter at this time.

Such a program is, of course, one which comprises several distinct parts and they should be kept distinct in our minds if we would do our work well. The first part is that which deals with the reduction of the soldier's physical disability to its lowest terms. I have no intention of speaking now of the technical matters which comprise the reduction of the soldier's

physical handicap. Some of them might be very interesting to you, I dare say. Progress in surgery and in medicine has done very much to accomplish such a reduction as compared with what could have been done fifteen or twenty years ago. This progress has made it possible to do very differently for the soldier from the moment he is wounded, and the conduct of the surgeons at the front is a very different thing in this day from that which it would have been only ten years ago; medical science has much more to offer the wounded soldier today than it then had.

The conditions of disablement with which the men come to us vary quite greatly and what requires to be done for the man depends, naturally, upon the character of his disablement. It can very readily be understood that the course to be pursued with a blinded man will be very different from that in the case of one who has lost the right arm; the task in the case of one who has lost the right arm will be quite different from that involving the loss of the left arm. I shall not enumerate the different forms of disablement which are encountered; there are enough of them, I assure you. It seems to me that the most important thing for us to think about at this juncture and with respect to all of these injuries, considered in a collective way, is their effect upon the soldier's morale. That this effect is a peculiar one you will not easily appreciate unless you have had the advantage of contact with the men themselves. Many of these men come to us with their morale decidedly impaired; not in the sense of being sorry for having made the sacrifice for the sake of our country, nor in any sense coming back like whipped or beaten men because they have to carry throughout their lives decided evidence of physical impairment; nor is it because they realize or fear the effect of a considerably lessened industrial efficiency. I refer rather to an attitude of doubt or suspicion which needs to be overcome. There can be no question that some of the injured men have the feeling that the government is striving to reduce their handicaps with a view to minimizing its own debt to them rather than for their own sakes and some of them harbor the idea that if they try too hard in assisting to overcome their disablement it may in some way lessen what the government will do for them afterwards because they have done too well

for themselves. Now this is a perfectly natural thing; on the face of it one might be tempted to be somewhat amused over it. It is, however, a perfectly serious condition which is encountered and which needs to be met with much tact. The men whom I have in mind have nothing about them of the character of the malingerer and they have nothing in their records to be ashamed of, I may assure you. In fact, when a man has lost an arm or a leg it is both difficult and unnecessary to pretend. This situation needs to be taken into consideration, however, and in a most sympathetic manner.

Still more important is the loss in morale which some men exhibit and which is to be ascribed to impairment of the spirit of self-reliance, due to the fact that they have still to be shown what they may be made to accomplish in the way of effective labor. This loss can be made good only when the man can be shown by his own accomplishment; it matters not how eloquently he is spoken to, nor how much he is given to read about the possibilities of restoring mutilated men to industrial activity, it is quite impossible for the man himself to imagine his own re-establishment until he has begun the demonstration upon himself. In the case of more serious forms of disablement, the first efforts at productive occupation may be very discouraging by reason of the difficulties which are to be expected. I have encountered a certain number of men whom it was difficult to interest in their own problems for reasons which seemed very obscure at first and which became apparent through giving them the opportunity of visiting their families before the real job of physical reconstruction was tackled. Once realized, the feeling of such men can easily be appreciated and must be looked upon as rather creditable than otherwise. Such men, having passed through the period of wound healing, felt themselves to be perfectly well save for their mutilation; not having seen their folks and received the welcome surely due to them, the prospect of remaining in hospital for a considerable additional period was extremely unpleasant, no matter how great the promised reward. As soon as we managed to secure furloughs of thirty or sixty days for these men, the situation changed entirely. It is not a part of military doctrine to send soldiers home to see their folks but it is most human for them to want to do it and once this fact was

properly appreciated, we had made a decided step forward. I mention this simply as one of the things which is required for making progress with the men. They require to be handled with tact, with judgment and with sympathy, but that sympathy must not be demonstrated by means of a facial expression or a pat on the back. The men are willing to be assisted to help themselves; this is the spirit of the American. He wishes his softer feelings taken into consideration but he does not want to be told about it.

In many cases the chief thing for which the soldier must be managed is a mental impairment which is not the result of physical damage, such as the loss of a member, but which is itself the primary cause of disablement. Such are the cases of so-called shell shock, with which I, fortunately, have nothing to do professionally; they do not come within the purview of my activities. These men require to be handled as a separate group. At the same time, the mental factor needs to be taken into consideration in many men with a physical disablement; and it would be an obvious error to consider either the physical or the psychic factor independently or to attack the one to the exclusion of the other. We are concerned with all of these things at this juncture, in so far as they influence the men's future activities.

In the case of the disabled soldier a decision of primary importance is whether it will be advisable for him to continue in his former occupation or whether he shall be prepared to engage in a new and different one because of the change made in his vocational possibilities by the character of his disablement. His own feelings with regard to this will vary according to his personal characteristics as well as his physical condition. Many a man comes back disabled in some way, having perhaps lost a hand, convinced in his own mind that he can no longer do the thing which he had before done, when this is not at all the case and when the thing which he had done before is still the very best thing for him to do in the future. For some men who come back with such a feeling, it is to prove a very salutary thing, because that which they had done before was by no means the best thing for them to do; some men of excellent mental endowment who had not the opportunity to make use of it in their work may now seize the chance which

is given them and thus convert misfortune into a blessing. As was remarked by a previous speaker, this war experience will give to many a man the chance to find his proper level; it will give him the opportunity to do something which he did not before have the chance to do, and this break in the continuity of his experience will present him with a brand-new opportunity.

It follows, therefore, that each man's case requires to be studied in an individual way. In accordance with what has been said, such study must comprise two distinct parts; the first is the curative part and has to do with putting him into the best possible physical condition. This is a medical problem, pure and simple. The second part is the preparation for future activity; this involves the restoration to industrial service in accordance with the text which has been assigned to me. It is a task in industrial education and training, but it is contingent upon the success which has attended the work of the hospital. My object in emphasizing the separate identity of these two kinds of effort in behalf of the disabled soldier is not to launch into a technical discussion regarding either of them, but rather to clear up a general misconception with respect to the curative workshop, or that which is known as occupational therapy. Even by some who are themselves engaged in the work, there is a tendency to confuse the two parts of the work; many continue to hold that the curative shop should have some definite connection with the future industrial activity of the men, whereas this is not the case. The program of the curative shop should be formed solely with a view to assisting the work of physical restoration; the man who is set to work in the carpenter shop with plane or saw may be destined to teach school or to keep books. The shop is to provide for him the means of getting rid of stiffness of the fingers or wrist, of restoring motion to a disabled knee; its function is to furnish a place and mechanism by which instead of having to put him through a certain number of movements daily, which are bound to become tedious and uninteresting and finally very irksome, we are enabled to reach the same, or even a better result by achieving the same kind of movements through work of a productive character. The men's interest is thus aroused and the end is attained in a much more pleasant and attractive manner. By

the measure of this, it is sure to be more efficient. It has been found by experience, even before this war, that the effort to combine the curative program with the educational is very apt to result in inefficiency for both and this confusion of effort had best be avoided. At the same time, there is no reason why we should not be making a very careful and scientific study of the vocational possibilities of the men, during the curative period. This should imply careful inquiry into both the mental and physical characteristics of the men and should take into account their own desires and ambitions. The curative period may be shaded off into the educational and may thus furnish a period of trial of the utmost value to the man and to those who are seeking to guide him into the path which he may later tread with the greatest success. If such study be carefully and sensibly made, we come to some very interesting conclusions. We find men, for example, whose occupations have been largely physical but who are entitled by mental endowment to do much higher grade work than they have ever before done; we find men, on the other hand, who aspire to mental activity but who had better be doing work involving the use of their hands to a greater extent than has before been the case. All this means putting the man at the job for which he is best fitted and most of the wounded men are in hospital sufficiently long to make such careful investigations; this is true, at least, of the men with whom we are at present concerned, those who come into the Reconstruction Hospitals. Sometimes the man's own idea for future activity leads him astray and it is difficult to make him see it; here the tact of the educational officer comes into play. I know of one instance of a man who wished to become a typist and whom the educational officer considered manifestly unfitted for this work. Argument and persuasive eloquence were of no avail. Instead of insisting further the educational officer now changed his tactics and put the man at a typewriter, but he put him beside a man who was already proving to be very efficient at the work; it was not long before our friend asked to be given another job. Needless to say he was now given one at which he was more likely to succeed.

Even as the problem of industrial restoration divides itself into these two parts, the curative and the educational, so the government has provided two agencies with which to meet it.

The medical department of the army with its hospitals is equipped with curative workshops, for occupational therapy which is to be employed while the man is still a patient; the Federal Vocational Education Board is then charged with training the men for the new occupations for which they are best adapted and with maintaining them at public expense until they have been so trained as to be self-supporting in their new occupations; it is also the purpose to find suitable occupation for them as the occasion demands. We thus have a very comprehensive and commendable program on the part of the government, one which is deserving of great praise if it is effectively carried out. There seems to be every reason for believing that it will be. I should have this personal criticism to make of the plan as it exists; that there is an unnecessary and undesirable hiatus between the work of the hospitals as a part of the medical department of the army and the work of the Federal Vocational Education Board, in so far as the latter begins its activity on behalf of the disabled soldier only after his discharge and the army loses its control and opportunity for continuous observation of him at this same time. To my mind, the work of the Federal Board should go more deeply into the hospital period than is the case and the duty of studying the man from a vocational point of view should be charged to it, rather than to the medical department of the army; the work of the medical department of the army, on the other hand, should follow the soldier beyond the confines of the hospital. I feel that the sharp delimitation of the spheres of these two agencies is both undesirable and unnecessary.

There is another thought upon which I would dwell, for a moment and in conclusion. The result of all of this planning and effort in behalf of the crippled soldier should be a distinct addition to our social assets; we should be put in possession of a well tried mechanism by which the disabled industrial worker should be helped in a similar manner in time of peace. We have gone through a dreadful war experience. An exact account of the casualties which our army has sustained is not yet accessible but the figures are large. Approximately one hundred and twenty thousand wounded men, still requiring hospital care, are on the other side of the Atlantic waiting

to be brought back here for further treatment; not less than three thousand men have suffered amputations of consequence. We feel this keenly, for these are our own brethren and they have made great sacrifices in behalf of our common cause. So does the industrial worker, however, who is disabled at his peace-time job make a similar sacrifice. The number of our countrymen who have been disabled by war within the last fifty years will not compare in the least with the number whose working capacity has been destroyed or seriously impaired by peaceful industry within our borders during the same period. The case of these men does not appeal to us with the same force; we rightly place the sacrifice of patriotism very high. Surely we must recognize, however, that the well-being of the industrial workers of the nation is a matter of utmost concern from a viewpoint both economic and humanitarian as well. The disablements resulting from industrial casualties are astonishingly like those of war in their end results, however dissimilar they may be in cause; by this token, they call for the very same kind of agencies, looking toward the restoration of men to industrial and social usefulness and independence. Even more in the case of the industrial cripple than in that of the war cripple, however, the program of reconstructive helpfulness assumes a magnitude and economic importance which places it beyond the scope of private and individual enterprise; it does not assume a practical aspect, for this reason, until we view it as a function of society in organization, therefore of the government.

I wish to conclude, therefore, by expressing the hope that as the result of the great endeavor which the nation is making in behalf of its war mutilés, we shall see clearly our duty toward our industrial mutilés also and that we shall do it while the urge of patriotic endeavor is strong upon us, for this too is a high order of patriotism.

[298]